

STATEMENT OF  
FCC COMMISSIONER GLORIA TRISTANI  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS  
OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
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Good morning. I am pleased to be here today to discuss the FCC's role as we continue to move from monopoly-based regulation of communications markets to free and open competition.

The 1996 Telecommunications Act's overarching goal is to open up all communications markets to competition as quickly as possible. As the long distance and wireless markets have demonstrated, competition will provide consumers with more innovation, better services and lower prices. Competition will also create new jobs at home and improve the competitiveness of our domestic industries abroad. The 1996 Act will expand these competitive benefits to other segments of the communications industry. The transition may not always be easy. It may not be as fast as we had hoped. But given the competitive forces set in motion by the 1996 Act, I believe that it is inevitable.

In addition to competition, I'm also committed to ensuring that all Americans -- rural and urban, rich and poor, minority and non-minority -- have the opportunity to participate in the communications revolution. As technology continues to advance, access to technology will become a critical tool for our citizens to compete. That is why I am so committed to universal service. In sparsely-populated states like New Mexico, where I lived for fifteen years before my appointment to the FCC, universal service permits average citizens to have telephone service who otherwise would not be able to

afford it. The benefit to these Americans of having telephone service -- and the benefit to our nation of having a citizenry with the tools to compete in the global information economy -- is invaluable.

I am committed to working closely with our state colleagues to preserve and enhance the gains made by universal service, and to address other areas of mutual concern. Until my appointment to the FCC, I served as an elected member of the New Mexico state commission with jurisdiction over telecommunications. I understand the value of consulting with those on the front lines who have first-hand knowledge of the specific circumstances facing individual states and localities. I hope that my experience on both the state and federal level will enable me to play a useful role in bridging any differences that may arise.

In the broadcast context, my commitment to inclusiveness leads me to support efforts to promote a diversity of media voices. As a woman and a Latina with Puerto Rican, Mexican and Cuban roots, I believe that a rich diversity of media voices is vital to our national well-being. I believe that the public dialogue is enhanced, and that communities are best served, when all voices have an opportunity to be heard. Indeed, I believe that our democratic processes assume that citizens will have access to a wide variety of antagonistic views on issues of public concern.

In the end, all of our efforts are meant to do one thing -- improve the lives of the American people. That's why some of the actions I'm proudest of over the past six months are those that will have a direct impact on the lives of real people. Last December, for instance, we issued an Order requiring wireless telephone providers to pass through all emergency 911 calls immediately, even if the caller is away from home and not a subscriber to the local wireless service. This will save lives by permitting

emergency calls to go through that otherwise may have been blocked. We also took the final steps to implement Congress' "V-Chip" legislation by finding acceptable the Industry system for rating television programming and establishing technical requirements for the V-Chip. As the V-Chip becomes commercially available, parents should have access to the tools they need to protect their children from television violence and other programming that they deem objectionable.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.